

THE DEVELOPMENT OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S
POLITICAL WORLD VIEW

by

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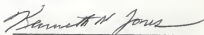
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INTRODUCTION

The British conquest of India had repercussions of far-reaching significance on India not only politically, socially, and economically but also ideologically. For the first time since the coming of Islam India was faced with an alternative ideology. Western ideas were spread through Western education, foreign officials and administrative methods. Although the peasants on the whole remained unaffected- they farmed the land as they had for centuries and paid taxes in like manner- other segments of the population realized that some modus vivendi had to be reached regarding Western civilization as represented by the British. Responses ranged from total acceptance to synthesis to rejection. The former ruling elites, denied their power by the British, with few exceptions, rejected the new ideology and sank into inaction and apathy. At the other end of the continuum were a small number who saw total acceptance of the new as a solution to their ideological dilemma. In Calcutta a group influenced by the Scottish Presbyterian Alexander Duff accepted Christianity as a corollary to their general acceptance of the West. For a time there were quite a few high class converts but with time they found their position almost untenable if they wished to retain their identity as true Indians.

Somewhere between the above two groups on the acceptance-rejection continuum were the religious elites and merchant and government service castes. Many of the Brahmins, Baidyas and Kayasthas went into the service of the East India Company from

similar service in the Moghul system or under the Hindu rajas. They were able to do this because they possessed certain skills: "experience in administration and law; entrepreneurial techniques and an accustomed readiness to work in an alien lingua franca; literacy, and experience in using that literacy in the service of organization."¹ The imposition of British rule meant new opportunities for employment and wealth to those who could adapt linguistically, and to some extent culturally. This implied a degree of alienation from the traditional Hindu culture. In the process of coming to terms with the new situation each group became involved in the process of forming a new identity.

One solution to the identity dilemma was a synthesis of traditional Hindu values with certain aspects of Western culture. Applying Western thought to current Hinduism many urged for renewal and reform in Hinduism. Ram Mohan Roy, a Brahmin from Calcutta, in the early part of the nineteenth century was remarkable in the way he was able to effect a synthesis. Roy felt reason and the rights of the individual were basic to both Hindu (Upanisads) and Western thought. Indians had the same rights therefore as Europeans and they could reform their society by removing the accretions of ages. On this basis he attacked suttee, the abuses of caste, the status of women and idolatry. Since the West was not really inimical to Hindu ideas, the Hindus could borrow freely from it. Roy advocated the acquisition and

¹J. H. Broomfield, "The Regional Elites: A Theory of Modern Indian History," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. III, No. 3 (September, 1966), p. 280.

use of English as well as the study of English literature and science. To spread his ideas he founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1830.

Another more orthodox ideological possibility for those faced with the identity problem was that advocated by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. He went back to the Vedas and also rejected caste, idolatry, polygamy, child marriage and the seclusion of widows. But his concept of a glorious Vedic age in the past meant that reform did not mean giving in to the West but returning to the glories of the past. For those who accepted his views "religious conviction eased the fear of becoming westernized, of becoming alienated from one's roots and merely copying the detested foreigner."² Dayanand's Arya Samaj offered Indians the possibility of an ideology they could respect which had traditional roots.

Most of the new middle class consisting of technicians, doctors, lawyers, professors, journalists, managers, clerks joined neither the Brahmo Samaj nor the Arya Samaj but engaged in their own process of selection and absorption. The majority did not abandon caste or traditional ritual but added to these Western ideas and certain Western social customs. At home, when at ease they would wear the ghoti but at work they appeared in a suit. Their actions were based on the belief that the Indian and Western systems were not irreconcilable. Change, on the whole, seemed to come much more readily in the realm of ideas

²Kenneth W. Jones, "Identity, Ideology and the Arya Samaj: Acculturation in the Punjab, 1860-1900," A Paper read at the Association of Asian Studies Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, Feb., 1967.

than in the realm of social customs sanctioned by centuries of tradition; so Indians might speak for equal rights in public and yet accept caste at home.³ Ideas which this class imbibed from their British education were nationalism, civil liberties and constitutional self-government.

Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru's father, belonged to the new middle which sought to find its own identity in a process of synthesis of Hindu and Western ideas, values and customs.⁴ As a distinguished and affluent Kashmiri Brahmin lawyer with a Western education he appeared in many ways more Western than Indian.

His English education broadened his horizon and implanted in him an admiration for British literature, institutions, liberal thought, science and human reason. It also produced in him a desire for political and social reform. Motilal championed the latter in his early career, especially the efforts to remove the evils of caste and purdah. He also admired English dress and manners and sought to emulate them. Nevertheless his Anglicism had its limits. He did not discard the joint family but faithfully performed his duties as the eldest living male of the household. (His father died before he was born; his brother died when Motilal was twenty-six) His wife Swarup Rani remained an orthodox Hindu all her life. Motilal, though rejecting religion

³Percival Spear, A History of India, Vol. II (Baltimore, 1965), p. 166.

⁴His grandfather served as the first legal advisor to the East India Company at the Royal Court; his father was the police chief of Delhi.

intellectually, joined in the celebration of certain Hindu festivals such as the Holi, Divali and Janmashtami. When Jawaharlal was born he had a horoscope prepared by the court astrologer of the Khetri state. Motilal belonged to the English elite who were very Western in many respects, yet had deep Indian roots and an Indian feeling for life. Jawaharlal resembled his father in this respect. The ideological currents which influenced him were mainly Western in origin yet in his own inimitable way he was able to retain his identity as an Indian.

His parental home, as already noted, was Western in many ways and yet there was also a strong Indian influence. Nehru's mother and a widowed aunt who lived with them, told him stories from Hindu mythology and from the Ramayana and Mahabharatha when he was young. They were both very religious and scrupulously performed their pujahs and rituals. On occasion he accompanied his mother to the Ganges for a dip and he developed a sentimental attachment for the Ganges which remained throughout his life. Sometimes he visited temples in Allahabad or Benares with her or even went to see a sanyasin. The great religious festivals were celebrated with lights and processions, noise, merriment and sweets. Memories of these occasions were not eradicated or made shameful by his increasing Western education.

At the age of twelve he underwent the Upanayana or sacred thread ceremony which initiated him into the adult male ranks of the Brahmin caste. At the age of twenty-six he was married

within his own caste by parental arrangement. Motilal chose Kamala Kaul, the daughter of a prosperous Kashmiri businessman of the same caste, to be his bride. The marriage took place on Vasanta Panchami the day which heralds the coming of spring, and the ceremony followed the prescribed Hindu rituals. Kamala remained the more traditional member of the family and never really felt at home in a Westernized atmosphere. Nehru, though very Western in his outlook retained his Brahmin pride and a certain Indian sensitivity for life.

He characterized himself as an individual suspended between two worlds and belonging neither to India nor to the West. "I have become a queer mixture of East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me as she does to all her children, in innumerable ways; and behind me lie somewhere in the subconscious, racial memories of a hundred generations of Brahmins. I cannot get rid of either the past inheritance or my recent acquisitions. They are both a part of me, and, though they help me in both the East and the West, they also create in me a feeling of spiritual loneliness not only in public activities but in life itself. I am a stranger and an alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes I have an exile's feeling."⁵ Edward Shils maintains that the contention of feeling alien in India, common to many of the intellectuals, is superficial- "a

⁵Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography (London, 1936), pp. 597-98.

romantic distortion of a partial, very fragmentary truth."⁶ British administrators and publicists who preferred the Indian peasant to the Indian who had a Western education and who wished to derogate restless and dissatisfied educated Indians originated the accusation. In time many came to believe it of themselves; Nehru belongs to this group.

Most of Nehru's ideas had an exogenous origin but he nevertheless cannot be called rootless; he retained a strong Indian identity throughout his life.⁷

In this paper the writer will attempt to examine the development of Nehru's political world view before he assumed power as prime minister in 1947. Nehru never adopted one ideology in toto but strands of various ideologies such as liberalism, nationalism, socialism, and internationalism can be found in his thinking. Nehru's background, education, external events and

⁶Edward Shils, The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation (The Hague, 1961), p. 61.

⁷In his will and testament, made public after his death he paid tribute to the Ganges as "a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present, and flowing on to the great ocean of the future." Then he continued: "And though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom, and am anxious that India should rid herself of all shackles that bind and constrain her and divide her people, and suppress a vast number of them and prevent the free development of the body and spirit; though I seek all this I do not wish to cut myself off from the past completely. I am proud of that great inheritance that has been, and is, ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in that unbroken chain which goes back to the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India. That chain I would not break, for I treasure and seek inspiration from it." Norman Palmer, "Jawaharlal Nehru and Modern India," in A. B. Shah, ed., Jawaharlal Nehru - A Critical Tribute (Bombay, 1965), p. 62.

other determining factors will be analyzed with particular reference to his nationalism, socialism and internationalism. Since Nehru was a fairly voluminous writer and much has also been written by scholars about him, this is a formidable task.

NATIONALISM

Nationalism was a dominant and underlying strand in Nehru's world view. This is not unusual as it had become the working creed of the new Western educated class as a whole. "As rationalism undermined personal belief in the old gods, as distinct from social acceptance, the new class felt a chill vacuum at the vital point of religious experience. This was filled by the new sentiment of political nationalism."¹ It is difficult to discern the exact moment when nationalism first came to play a role in Nehru's thinking. There is evidence that it took roots at an early age at home before he developed any ideological views. When Nehru was a youngster at Anand Bhawan, he reminisces later, he frequently heard relatives discussing incidents involving the patronizing, arrogant attitude and actions of the British toward the Indians. Soon he developed a resentment against these alien rulers and "Whenever an Indian hit back, I was glad."² The westernized atmosphere of the home and the influence of the English governesses and tutors did not nullify this feeling of resentment. Instead Nehru, like many others belonging to the educated middle class developed a love-hate attitude toward the English. He admired English literature and liberal ideals but hated the imperial system which the English represented in India. To him the English "sahibs" in India were

¹Percival Spear, A History of India, Vol. II (Baltimore, 1965), p. 166.

²Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography (London, 1936), p. 6.

not truly English but part of an intolerable system. English officials and missionaries seemed to change on their arrival in India; in due time they developed the "sahib" mentality. C. F. Andrews remarks on this in his book India and Britain; he relates how he as a new English arrival in India was drilled on how to act by others who preceded him.

Never, for a moment forget that in this country as an Englishman, you depend entirely on your prestige. You must never let that down; for if it goes, everything goes with it...You will do incalculable injury to your fellow countrymen if you let your sympathies carry you away and allow any 'native' to become familiar with you. Never give way to them. They don't understand it; and they will take it as a clear token of your own weakness. None of them are to be trusted in the same way that you would trust an Englishman.³

No doubt the climate accounted for some of the changes in attitude and personality but the reasons were usually not heat and humidity. Regarding the effect of the Indian climate on the British N. C. Chaudhuri writes:

After experiencing the English weather I had no difficulty in understanding why Englishmen became so offensive in India, losing their usual kindliness and equability in human relations. Their sense of proportion broke down, the habit of understatement disappeared, and they became extremists with an incredible stridency in their opinions, which became raw and crude. In many cases they degenerated into outright cads, and the more sensitive or specialized the English organism, the more warped it became.

Weather may have aided in the transformation of the Englishman but the imperial superiority complex was more to

³C. F. Andrews, India and Britain - A Moral Challenge (London, 1935), p. 72.

⁴Nirad C. Chaudhuri, The Continent of Circe. (New York, 1966), p. 120.

blame. The unwritten law in political and public relationships was that there was to be no admission of mistakes and no amends made in the nature of an apology. Since there was such a disparity in numbers between rulers and ruled the British argued that the only safeguard was that Indians believe in the inherent superiority of the British.

Compassion could be voiced but one Indian compared this compassion to that of a man about to crush a helpless worm.

Turn, turn thy hasty foot aside,
Nor crush that helpless worm!
The frame they wayward looks deride
Required a God to form.⁵

One example of British compassion was contained in a book of instructions for British motorists put out by the Automobile Club of Bengal. English drivers were urged, when faced by the frustrating behavior of Indian pedestrians on the road "to slow up, touch the inadequately clad behind of the offending Indian with his hot radiator...The nimble Indian was bound to jump out of the way and save the Englishman from the sin of homicide."⁶

Small wonder that Nehru and others belonging to the educated middle class resented the British rulers in India who scorned and humiliated even those belonging to the intelligentsia. On the other hand Nehru's governesses and tutors imbibed in him a love for the English language, literature and science.

⁵Chaudhuri, p. 128.

⁶Chaudhuri, p. 128.

Sentiments which were further encouraged by his seven year stay in England. The love-hate attitude continued to exist in his mind without mental compromise.

Nehru's studies at Harrow and Cambridge encouraged his nationalist feelings. He became well acquainted with the works of the great nineteenth century English liberals- James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer and others. These spokesmen for liberalism advocated human equality, the dignity of the individual, the essential goodness of man, the efficacy of the appeal to reason, a government by an assembly freely elected and responsible to the people and the state as the guardian of human liberty through constitutional guarantees.⁷ Instead of reconciling him to British rule his studies helped him to develop standards whereby to judge that rule. The discrepancy between the ideal and the actual became ever more clear to him. He was also exposed to the liberal nationalist writings of Garibaldi and Mazzini who dreamed of liberating Italy from foreign and domestic tyrants in order to establish a unified Italian republic on a popular basis.⁸ At times the romantic Mazzini appeared almost mystical. He insisted that national states and nationalities existed in order

⁷J. Salwyn Schapiro, Liberalism and the Challenge of Fascism (New York, 1949), pp. 1-20.

⁸Carlton J. H. Hayes, The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism (New York, 1950), p. 153.

At Harrow Nehru did very well in his classes and as a prize on one occasion he was awarded one of Trevelyan's books on Garibaldi. He found the book so exciting that he bought the accompanying two volumes. Soon Italy's and India's struggle became inextricably mixed in his mind and in his dreams Nehru became involved in liberating India from alien rule. Nehru, Autobiography, p. 19.

for man to fulfill his duty to mankind. Only if Italy were a free, unified republic could she perform her duties to humanity. She, who had been enslaved for centuries, could regenerate herself through virtue and self sacrifice.⁹ These ideas and ideals inspired Nehru in later years when he was to devote himself completely to the cause of independence and unity. When Nehru returned from England in 1912 he had strong nationalist sentiments but it was not till 1920 that he became actively involved in the Indian nationalist movement.

The Indian nationalist movement was a political movement but it also had economic, social and religious aspects. Although it began as a movement of protest it eventually became a movement of revolt. It became officially organized in 1885 with the founding of the Indian National Congress but it had its roots in certain movements and in the work of a number of individuals who were trying to revitalize India and rediscover her past in the early nineteenth century.¹⁰ The early leaders of Congress, imbued with Western liberalism were moderates seeking to pressure the British government for greater participation by Indians in the political life of the country.¹¹ Not long after the turn of the century the leadership became divided between moderates and

⁹Hayes, p. 157.

¹⁰Among these were Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the Brahmo Samaj, Dayananda Saraswati and the Arya Samaj, Vivekananda and the Rama Krishna movement, organizations such as the British India Society, the British Indian Association and the Calcutta Indian Association.

¹¹Almost without exception they were members of the Western-educated middle class; many of them were lawyers.

extremists. The latter were more critical of the British government and more militant in their demands. During World War I the moderates and extremists cooperated on most issues. The year 1920 has been called the "Great Divide" in the history of Indian nationalism. This was the year Gandhi emerged as the new leader of Congress, with a new method of political action—satyagraha (nonviolent noncooperation) and a more advanced goal—swaraj (self-rule) and a mass party which in years to come rallied millions of Indians to the cause of national freedom.

Nehru's urge to political action was aroused by the Home Rule League in 1917 but it remained only partially expressed till a few years later. On his inspiration for nationalism he writes the following in The Discovery of India:

The initial urge came to me I suppose through pride, both individual and national, and the desire, common to all men, to resist another's domination and have freedom to live the life of our choice. It seemed monstrous to me that a country like India, with a rich and immemorial past, should be bound hand and foot to a far-away island which imposes its will upon her.¹²

Nehru's was not a lone voice, most of the members of the middle class agreed that India should not be subservient to Britain but should be an independent free state.

The Rowlatt Bills, which suppressed civil liberties and the subsequent Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre in 1919 in which the casualties were 379 killed and over 1,200 wounded, had a profound effect on Nehru and jolted him into active participation in the nationalist movement. The Punjab tragedy came as a shock to Nehru

¹²Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India (New York, 1946) p. 37.

for he had admired British justice and liberal idealism during his seven-year stay in England. How could the British who advocated human equality and the worth and dignity of the individual at home, ruthlessly kill innocent Indians? To him the incident was an insult to the Indian national honor, pride and self-respect. He resented Colonel Dyer's actions but he also resented the reaction to Dyer's deed in England.

The real reaction of the British ruling class was never in doubt...This cold-blooded approval of the deed shocked me greatly. It seemed absolutely immoral, indecent, to use public school language, it was the height of bad form. I realized then, more vividly than I had before, how brutal and immoral imperialism was and how it had eaten into the souls of the British upper classes.¹³

Nehru, at this point, was psychologically ready to become involved in a movement to free India from British domination and Gandhi provided him the opportunity.

Here at last was a way out of the tangle, a method of action which was straight and open and possibly effective. I was afire with enthusiasm and wanted to join...immediately. I hardly thought of the consequences- law-breaking, jail-going etc.- and if I thought of them I did not care.¹⁴

Scholars have given various explanations regarding Nehru's attraction to Gandhi with whom he differed in so many respects. Shils contends that intellectuals, though Western in many respects, retain their response to the charismatic.¹⁵ Gandhi represented an ideal- Indian freedom- an ideal which transcended personal and group interests. Nehru and others belonging to the intelligentsia,

¹³Jawaharlal Nehru, India's Freedom (A Selection of Essays and Speeches) (New York, 1962), p. 50

¹⁴Nehru, Autobiography, p. 41.

¹⁵Shils, The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity, p. 103.

became Gandhi's followers because he worked for Indian freedom even though they disagreed with the religious overtones of the movement and with Gandhi's vision of an unindustrial democratic society. The intelligentsia hoped for a modern industrial state once independence had been achieved; in the meantime they followed Gandhi.

Nehru admitted that nationalism was essentially an anti-feeling; "It feeds and fattens on hatred and anger against other national groups and especially against the foreign rulers of a subject country."¹⁶ He argued that this hatred and anger were directed not against individual Englishmen but against the imperial rule of the English. Nationalism was a healthy force and not a narrow fanatical one, in his opinion. "For any subject country, national freedom must be the first and dominant urge, for India, with her intense sense of individuality and past heritage it was doubly so."¹⁷

Gandhi appeared on the Indian political scene at a most propitious moment- a moment when the nationalist movement was devoid of any creative thought or leadership. There seemed to be only two recognized methods of political action; terrorism and constitutionalism. Nehru, a barrister steeped in the law, could not accept the former and he had become disillusioned about the latter. Gandhi created "a new mood and provided a way out, novel and untested, but potentially capable of breaking the

¹⁶Nehru, Autobiography, p. 75.

¹⁷Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 41.

deadlock and achieving the desired results."¹⁸ Because there seemed to be no other alternative Nehru channelled his nationalist hopes into Gandhi's noncooperation, nonviolent movement.

Two of the greatest evils of British rule in Nehru's opinion were imperialism and racism. He felt the ideology of the British was that of a "Master Race". "Biologists tell us that racialism is a myth and there is no such thing as a master race. But we in India have known racialism in all its forms ever since the commencement of British rule."¹⁹ Indians had suffered insults, humiliation and contempt too long; Nehru believed this would only end with independence. But Nehru's nationalist hopes included not only freedom from alien rule but also the desire to raise the level of the Indian people psychologically and spiritually as well as politically and economically. "It was the building up of the inner strength of the people that we were after, knowing that the rest would inevitably follow."²⁰ He wanted people to have pride in being Indian as opposed to British or American. One cannot help but compare some of his statements to those of Mazzini who sought similar goals for the Italian people a century earlier.

Nehru's main nationalistic thrust in the twenties was political freedom. This was uppermost in his mind and at the 1927 Madras Congress Session he moved a resolution for complete

¹⁸Michael Brecher, Nehru: A Political Biography (London, 1959), p. 75.

¹⁹Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 327.

²⁰Ibid., p. 45.

independence despite Gandhi's opposition. The issue was debated for two years till Congress was convinced that complete independence not merely dominion status was to be their goal.

In the thirties "unity" became one of Nehru's primary concerns. He seemed to be under an illusion that the mystical type of unity Mazzini eloquently espoused in the mid-nineteenth century was a possibility for India in the mid-twentieth. He argued that the political unity superimposed by the British on India provided the basis for a deeper unity.

It was a unity of common subjection but it gave rise to the unity of common nationalism. The idea of a united and free India gripped the people. It was not a superficial idea imposed from above, but the natural outcome of the fundamental unity which has been the background of Indian life for thousands of years.²¹

People united in their opposition to foreign domination and for a time the divisiveness of caste, religion and region seemed submerged; Nehru failed to realize how strong these feelings were and that Congress was an umbrella for a wide variety of factions. He sincerely believed in a fundamental unity despite the great diversity in language, religion and customs. Underneath all this diversity he perceived an underlying unity.

There is little in common to outward seeming, between the Pathan of the North-West and the Tamil in the far South. Their racial stocks are not the same, though there may be common strands running through them; they differ in face and figure, food and clothing, and of course language. In the North-Western Frontier Province there is already the breath of Central Asia, and many a custom there as in Kashmir, remind one of the countries on the other side of the Himalayas. Pathan popular dances

²¹Jawaharlal Nehru, The Unity of India, (Collected Writings 1937-1940). (London, 1941), p. 19.

are singularly like Russian Cossack dancing. Yet with all these differences there is no mistaking the impress of India on the Pathan, as this is obvious on the Tamil.²²

Nehru had a deep and abiding faith in one Indian nationalism. Not for a moment would he concede that differences in language might hinder the growth of nationalism. He ridiculed the idea that India had hundreds of languages as "one of the legends about India which our English rulers have persistently circulated all over the world."²³ He claimed it was a "fiction of the philologist's and census commissioner's mind who wrote down every variation in dialect and every petty hill tongue... as a separate language, although it is only spoken by a few hundred of a few thousand persons."²⁴ Nehru pointed out that if these were all separate languages then Germany would have fifty to sixty languages. But "I do not remember any one pointing out this fact in proof of the disunity or disparity of Germany."²⁵ In Nehru's opinion there were approximately fifteen major languages, and regardless of the number he was confident that a lingua franca could be agreed on.

That religion could present a major obstacle to the national movement was vividly brought to his attention by the communal strife in the thirties. Already in the twenties he was distressed by the religious overtones in Gandhi's campaigns

²²Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 49.

²³Nehru, Autobiography, p. 452.

²⁴Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 161.

²⁵Ibid., p. 161.

but he was powerless to alter the situation and he also didn't want to make an issue over what appeared at the time to be rather unimportant. To Nehru there was no such thing as 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' nationalism, there was only 'Indian' nationalism. The idea of religious nationalism as advocated by Jinnah in his two-nation theory appeared absurd to him. If such a thesis were valid then "of two brothers one may be a Hindu, another a Moslem; they would belong to two different nations. These two nations existed in varying proportions in most of the villages of India. They were nations which had no boundaries; they overlapped. A Bengali Muslim and a Bengali Hindu, living together, speaking the same language and having much the same traditions and customs, belonged to different nations. All this was very difficult to grasp; it seemed a reversion to some medieval theory."²⁶ The two-nation theory remained an anathema to Nehru right up to the time of partition. He lived for the idea of the secular state as set forth by thinkers like Burke, Locke, Mill and George Lansbury. Religion, in any form, should be tolerated as a variety of individual opinion whether professed by a minority or majority of the nation. Religious ideas and influences however should be eliminated from public life. Religion should be considered a private matter and the powers of the government should not be used to coerce man's religious beliefs.

For Nehru a sense of national consciousness, a sense of belonging together against the rest of the world, was at the

²⁶Nehru, The Discovery of India, pp. 396-97.

heart of nationalism. The European idea of a monolithic nation with a direct relationship between the citizen and the state was his ideal and he failed to realize how unrealistic an ideal it was in the Indian setting.²⁷

Idealistically Nehru regarded nationalism not as an end in itself, but as a means to serve internationalism. "We have to build up this great country into a mighty nation, mighty not in the ordinary sense of the word, that is having great armies and all that, but mighty in thought, mighty in action, mighty in its peaceful service to humanity."²⁸ These words are almost an echo of Mazzini's words a century earlier. "The nation is the God-appointed instrument for the welfare of the human race, and in this alone its moral essence lies...Fatherlands are but the workshops of humanity."²⁹ Nehru still believed in this possibility when most politicians had discarded it as an antiquated romantic notion.

Nehru spoke of nationalism operating within the framework of revolution; obviously he did not use the word in the way Subhas Chandra Bose did. By revolution he did not mean an armed overthrow of the existing government; he speaks of revolution as a fundamental force shaping history and as a characteristic

²⁷A more realistic approach would have been to view loyalties to religion, caste and language as primary loyalties and to see the nation as a sort of superstructure.

²⁸Jawaharlal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, Vol. III, March 1953-August 1957 (Delhi, 1958), p. 35.

²⁹Hayes, p. 155.

of a healthy society. "So long therefore as the world is not perfect, a healthy society must have the seeds of revolt in it. It must alternate between revolution and consolidation."³⁰ A radical change was definitely needed in India in order to liberate her from foreign rule. "No living nation under alien rule can ever be at peace with its conqueror for peace means submission and submission means the death of all that is vital in a nation."³¹ The Independence pledge of January 1930 was, in Nehru's opinion, revolutionary:

We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people to have freedom to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have the opportunities for growth. We also believe that if any Government deprives the people of these rights and oppresses them the people have the further right to alter it or to abolish it."³²

Gandhi advocated nonviolent change and Nehru was strongly influenced by this philosophy especially in the twenties. He admired the morality and ethics of satyagraha- it was a worthy means to achieve a great goal. "A worthy end should have worthy means leading up to it. That seemed not only a good ethical doctrine but sound practical politics, for the means that are not good often defeat the end in view and raise new problems and difficulties."³³ Several years later his certainty had lessened somewhat. Nonviolence was no incontrovertible creed

³⁰J. S. Bright, ed., Selected Writings, 1916-1950 (Delhi, 1950), p. 71.

³¹Bright, Selected Writings, pp. 150-51.

³²Bright, Selected Writings, p. 42.

³³Nehru, Autobiography, p. 75.

for him as it was for Gandhi.

We were moved by these arguments (Gandhi's), but for us and for the National Congress as a whole the non-violent method was not, and could not be, a religion or an unchallengeable creed or dogma. It could only be a policy and a method promising certain results, and by the results it would have to be finally judged.³⁴

Nehru viewed non-violence as a practical necessity- the only possible method the nationalist movement could use successfully.

Armed rebellion seemed out of the question for the Indian people. We were disarmed and most of us did not even know the use of arms. Besides in a contest of violence, the organized power of the British Government or any state, was far greater than anything that could be raised against it. Armies might mutiny but unarmed people could not rebel and face armed forces.³⁵

Subhas Chandra Bose disagreed with Nehru's appraisal and organized the Indian National Army.³⁶ Though unsuccessful and taken prisoner by the British Indian Army, the Indian National Army aroused immense enthusiasm among Indians in the last months of the war and those immediately following. The public was determined the I.N.A. should not be punished as traitors by the authorities under military law and such trials as were held turned into a farce and fiasco.

³⁴Nehru, Autobiography, p. 84.

³⁵Jawaharlal Nehru, Nehru on Gandhi (New York, 1948), p. 10.

³⁶When the Japanese conquered Singapore and Malaya in 1942 60,000 Indians became prisoners-of-war. The Japanese soldiers, following instructions, were lenient on the Indians and even started Indian Independence Leagues. Subhas Chandra Bose arrived on the scene in the summer of 1943. With promises of a Free India 20,000 Indian prisoners joined his newly formed Indian National Army. On October 21, 1943 Bose proclaimed himself the Head of a Provisional Government of Free India; he also took the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Indian National Army, War Minister and Foreign Minister. On October 24, 1943 he declared war on Britain and the United States. When Bose was killed in a plane crash in August 1945, the I.N.A. collapsed.

Nehru personally disliked violence and armed uprising but it probably could have been used to advantage in attaining independence.³⁷ It is hard to say whether a guerilla Indian liberation army would have been successful if it had been organized in the twenties or early thirties. In the late thirties Nehru did admit that violence perhaps could be profitable but he dismissed it because of a lack of material and training.

Violence often brings reaction and demoralization in its train...it may be that we could profit by its use. But we do not have the material or training for organized violence and individual or sporadic violence is a confession of despair. The great majority of us, I take it, judge the issue not on moral but on practical grounds and if we reject violence it is because it promises us no substantial results.³⁸

Non-violence thus was not a creed for Nehru. He did however realize its value as a dynamic force able to lift the Indian people who had suffered degradation for centuries from their morass of demoralization and helplessness. The elite preferred it to violence because it was more in line with Western liberal ideals of change and reform. Nehru hoped that peaceful methods could effect change in the economic and social as well as the political sphere. The ultimate nationalist objective, which he hoped could be brought about by peaceful means was not merely Indian freedom, but human freedom- the emancipation of mankind. He confided these hopes to Indira, his daughter, in 1933.

³⁷Carstairs in The Twice-Born remarks that a Brahmin "should be ready to persist in what is right, even to his death, but he should not resort to violence." G. Morris Carstairs, The Twice-Born (Bloomington, 1962), p. 109.

³⁸Nehru, Unity of India, p. 33.

And unless we solve them for the whole world there will continue to be trouble. Such a solution can only mean the ending of poverty and misery everywhere. This may take a long time but we must aim at this and nothing less than this. Only then can we have real culture and civilization based on equality, where there is no exploitation of any country or class. Such a society will be a creative and progressive society, adapting itself to changing circumstances and basing itself on the cooperation of its members. And ultimately it must spread all over the world.³⁹

These were Nehru's ideals but he had no concrete outline of how this was to be accomplished. Such optimism is reminiscent of the nineteenth century thinkers who believed in the inevitability of human progress. In some ways Nehru was a leftover from the nineteenth century who failed to see that nineteenth century ideals could not realistically be actualized in the twentieth century.

³⁹Jawaharlal Nehru, Glimpses of World History (New York, 1942), p. 182.

SOCIALISM

Although nationalism was the underlying ideological strand in Nehru's world view socialism was also deeply rooted in his thought. Nehru and many others belonging to the Indian intelligentsia were attracted to socialism because of its claim to create a modern egalitarian society. They were oppressed by the material poverty in their own country and its industrial backwardness. Socialism promised the liberation of colored men from the white men who were equated as capitalists and foreigners. It permitted a denial of the West, in this case the British West, on behalf of an ideal which was at the same time Western in content and origin. Brahmin intellectuals were particularly attracted to it because it derogated the trading classes and fitted in their attitude to economic life.¹

Nehru first came into contact with socialism during his college days in England.² He was particularly attracted to the Fabian ideas of George Bernard Shaw, Beatrice and Sidney Webb and H. G. Wells. They stressed that socialism was an inevitable stage in the evolution of democracy. Being cautious and democratic they insisted that change must be acceptable to the majority of the people, it must be gradual and it must be constitutional

¹Shils, The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity, p. 83. "The Brahmin ideal of selfless devotion to the ideal, to the cultivation of the utterly unattached state of mind, contrasts sharply with the implicit goal of the businessman which is the amassing of money in large quantities." Shils, p. 104.

²Tibor Mende, Nehru: Conversations on India and World Affairs (New York, 1956), p. 14.

and peaceful.³ They had no desire to overturn society but were willing to work for legislative reform within the capitalist framework. Nehru was impressed with the Fabian vision of a logically ordered society. He admitted that his interest was a dilettante academic interest at this time; after he returned to India these ideas sank into the background. Fresh reading sometime later again stirred the socialistic ideas in his mind. "They were vague ideas, more humanitarian than scientific."⁴

In 1920 Nehru came into direct contact with the Indian peasant for the first time. The experience had a marked effect on him. Till then, he remarks "My political outlook was entirely bourgeois."⁵ Now "a new picture of India seemed to rise before me, naked, starving, crushed and utterly miserable. And their faith in us, casual visitors from the distant city, embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me."⁶ Nehru became aware of the degradation and overwhelming poverty of the masses, elements so alien to his own way of life. This experience "provided him with the emotional basis for his later conversion to socialism."⁷ He began to realize the limitations of a purely political approach in a nationalist movement; a complete transformation of conditions in the Indian countryside was

³Adam B. Ulam, Philosophical Foundations of English Socialism (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), p. 74.

⁴Nehru, Autobiography, p. 35.

⁵Nehru, Autobiography, p. 49.

⁶Nehru, Autobiography, p. 52.

⁷Brecher, p. 69.

a necessity if a 'good' society was to be brought about.

To a large extent the capitalist economic forms, imposed on India by Britain, accounted for the poverty and misery of the peasants. The British conquest of India was the conquest of a feudal nation by a capitalist nation. "Britain could not use colonial India for her own capitalist requirements without uprooting the feudal base of Indian society and introducing capitalist economic forms."⁸ Thus India's economic structure based on self-sufficient village economies was transformed into a single economic unit subjected to the economic requirements of the British trading, banking and industrial interests. Indian industrialization was obstructed or restricted and agricultural production was distorted to meet the raw material needs of British industries.⁹ India was useful as an agrarian raw-material producing colony and as a market for British industries.

Masses of Indian handicraftsmen, as a result of the introduction of British machine-made goods, were ruined and took to agriculture for subsistence. Land became overcrowded in vast areas. Its overcrowding led to subdivision and fragmentation which in turn resulted in uneconomic holdings a steady impoverishment of agriculturists and the deterioration of agriculture. There was a steady decline in the income of the agricultural population. Agrarian crises, the vacillations of the world market

⁸A. R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism (Bombay, 1948), p. 34.

⁹Commercialization and specialization were accelerated.

and the exploitation by middlemen who sold their products also aided in reducing their income. Many peasants unable to pay their land revenue were driven to borrow from moneylenders who extorted high rates of interest. In time the great majority of the agricultural population was heavily indebted which further accentuated their poverty. One result of the increasing poverty and indebtedness was that land passed into the hands of rich landlords, merchants and moneylenders. A new class of absentee landlords having no vital interest in the land, arose. Due to the great land hunger among the peasants they rented land to tenants who in turn sub-rented it to sub-tenants. The sub-tenant at the end of the chain ended up carrying the burden.

A. R. Desai remarks:

The passing of the land from the hands of the peasant proprietors into the hands of non-cultivating landlords brought about increasing polarization of classes in agrarian areas. At one pole of the agrarian population the class of non-cultivating landlords grew increasingly; at the other, the rapidly swelling class of agricultural proletariat as well as of the poorest peasants and sub-tenants who were hardly distinguishable from land labourers.¹⁰

Both classes continuously increased, especially after 1914; at one end of the pole property in land accumulated and at the other landlessness and extreme poverty. Radhakamal Mukerjee in a Congress Agrarian Inquiry Committee report stated:

So long as there is no radical change in the rural economy of India through land adjustments, agricultural cooperation or scientific farming, the problem of the landless peasants will become more and more acute and there will be the tendency for this class to come in line with the industrial proletariat of the cities. That will portend social upheavals.¹¹

¹⁰Desai, p. 72.

¹¹Congress Agrarian Inquiry Committee Report, 23, quoted in Desai, p. 72.

As long as Indian agriculture was geared to the economic necessities of British capitalism which required Indian raw materials for British industries, Indian agriculture remained distorted in its development. Only a politically independent India would be able to formulate new economic policies which would aid the free development of the Indian economy and mitigate the plight of the peasantry. Nehru realized this in 1920 and a transformation of conditions in the Indian country side became one of his nationalist goals.

His initial interest in the Soviet experiment can be traced to this period. In conversations with Tibor Mende he remarked that he sympathized with the Russian Revolution because "it was bringing up the underdog and it was equalizing people, removing vested interests and all that."¹² In the early twenties "...after the Russian Revolution the thing that impressed us most was the idea of planning; and more especially the stories we heard of the tremendous changes in the Central Asian parts which were very backward."¹³

The idea of planning appealed to Nehru's rational mind although it was foreign to the traditional Hindu mind. A. B. Shah points out:

The Hindu tradition does not recognize as of primary importance the obligation of man to society or to himself except in the context of Moksha the supreme goal of all human endeavor. It therefore emphasizes the individual in his spiritual aspect and the Brahman as the source and ultimate

¹²Mende, p. 16.

¹³Mende, p. 18.

end of the visible world. This predisposes the Hindu mind to an attitude of indifference to all intermediate, secular institutions like the state in the ordering of his priorities.¹⁴

Nehru felt that only if this asocial attitude were overcome and planned effort for economic development were initiated could any progress be made.

Nehru did not become a full-fledged convert to the creed of socialism till 1927. The particular occasion was the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities held in Brussels in February 1927. It was there at the Congress that Nehru, for the first time, came in contact with orthodox communists, left-wing socialists and radical nationalists from Asia and Africa. From this time on social reform and national independence became inextricably linked in his conception of India's future. Even though he was as yet not widely read in Marxist literature he issued a statement on the eve of the Congress which denounced Imperialism in Marxist phraseology.¹⁵ Nehru's speech at the plenary session of

¹⁴A. B. Shah, ed., Jawaharlal Nehru - A Critical Tribute, Introduction, p. 16; cf. A. B. Shah and C. R. M. Rao ed., Tradition and Modernity in India (Bombay, 1965), p. 11: "The traditional Hindu mind is incapable of feeling a sense of civic responsibility or wider secular loyalties for any length of time beyond its own kinship group."

¹⁵Lenin in Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism argued that imperialism contained within it the seeds of violent revolution. Imperialism was the stage of capitalism in which the newer capitalist powers would challenge the established powers for their share of "booty." Occasional world wars would therefore be a characteristic of imperialism. The outbreak of such wars would signal the revolt of colonial countries against exploitation by imperialist masters; in imperialist countries workers would revolt against their capitalist exploiters. V. I. Lenin, Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism (Moscow, n.d.), pp. 9-13. Nehru agreed with this interpretation of imperialism. At the time of his fifth arrest he said: "We have no quarrel with the English people much less the English worker, like us he has himself been the victim of imperialism and it is against this imperialism that we fight." Bright, Selected Writings, p. 33.

of the Congress outlined Britain's exploitation of India. He referred to the early period of British rule as "an epoch of predatory war- a period in which free-booters prowled about and committed plunder and robberies in an unbridled manner."¹⁶ He accused British imperialism of fostering India's communal divisions, uprooting her educational system and destroying her traditional economy. In the Congress resolution on India, drafted and moved by Nehru, there was also evidence of a marked socialist outlook. It declared, "that this Congress...trusts that the Indian national movement will base its programme on the full emancipation of the peasants and workers of India, without which there can be no real freedom."¹⁷

In his Autobiography Nehru recalls his attraction to Marxism at the Congress.

As between the labour worlds of the Second International and Third International, my sympathies were with the latter. The whole record of the Second International from the war onward filled me with distaste, and we in India had had sufficient personal experience of the methods of one of its strong supports- the British Labour party. So I turned inevitably with good will towards communism, for, whatever its faults, it was at least not hypocritical and not imperialistic...These attracted me, as also the tremendous changes taking place in Russia.

Even so Nehru had some serious reservations about the communists. "But the communists often irritated me by their dictatorial ways, their aggressive and rather vulgar methods, their habit of

¹⁶J. S. Bright, ed., Before and After Independence (Nehru's Speeches 1922-1950) (Delhi, 1950), p. 366.

¹⁷B. R. Nanda, The Nehrus - Motilal and Jawaharlal (London, 1962), p. 255.

denouncing everybody who did not agree with them."¹⁸ Thus as early as 1927 a dichotomy in Nehru's attitude toward communism is evident: he was attracted to its vision of a classless society but repelled by some of the methods employed to achieve it.

Nehru's exposure to communist views at the Brussels Congress was widened by a four-day visit to Moscow early in November 1927. His initial direct contact with the Soviets created a genuine sympathy for the Soviet experiment.¹⁹ The "random sketches and impressions" published in 1929 seem to be based on the naive assumption that the Soviet ideals pronounced by the leaders would invariably be translated into action. On the whole Nehru accepted what he saw and heard as evidence of a new society. He was impressed by the seeming equalitarianism in Moscow. "...The real change one notices in Moscow, and which grows on one with every day's stay, is in the atmosphere and the very air of the place. The contrasts between extreme luxury and poverty are not visible, nor does one notice the hierarchy of class or caste."²⁰ He was also impressed by the simplicity of the life of Soviet officials

¹⁸Nehru, Autobiography, p. 163.

¹⁹We must remember that when Nehru saw socialism in operation in Russia in 1927, in many respects he was seeing it in its best era. The violence of the civil war years had given way to the era of the New Economic Policy during which much private enterprise had been restored. Even the collectivization of the peasants had not yet begun. A small semblance of individual liberty was allowed; the Stalinist "Reign of Terror" was still to come. Plans for industrialization were being made and everywhere there seemed to be efforts of improvement - in education, penology, health etc.

²⁰Jawaharlal Nehru, Soviet Russia (Bombay, 1929), p. 13.

and leaders of the Communist party, particularly when contrasted with that of the British officials in Delhi. A brief tour of a prison increased his regard for communism. "If what we saw truly represents the state of prisons in the Russian Union, it can be said without a shadow of a doubt that to be in a Russian prison is far preferable than to be a worker in an Indian factory."²¹

His impression of Soviet educational efforts was favorable too. "...Although they failed to liquidate illiteracy they have shown remarkable results within these ten years."²² Judging from official statistics made available to him he also found peasant conditions improved. "The progress is remarkable when the manifold difficulties and the lack of aid from the outside are considered."²³

Nehru, attracted emotionally to the Soviet experiment, was extremely conscious of its practical significance for India.

Even our self interest compels us to understand the vast forces which have upset the old order of things...Russia thus interests us because it may help us to find some solution for the great problems which face the world today. It interests us specially because conditions there have not been, and are not even now, very dissimilar to conditions in India. Both are vast agricultural countries with only the beginnings of industrialization and both have to face poverty and illiteracy. If Russia finds a satisfactory solution for these, our work in India is made easier.²⁴

On his return to India Nehru made numerous speeches to

²¹Nehru, Soviet Russia, p. 76.

²²Nehru, Soviet Russia, p. 62.

²³Nehru, Soviet Russia, p. 56.

²⁴Nehru, Soviet Russia, pp. 2-3.

youth and student groups as well as to provincial party conferences on the twin goals of independence and socialism. "I wanted to spread the ideology of socialism especially among Congress workers and the intelligentsia, for these people, who were the backbone of the nationalist movement thought largely in terms of the narrowest nationalism."²⁵ Speaking to the All-Bengal Students Conference in September 1928 he praised Russia "as the greatestopponent of imperialism." He also restated his belief in communism "as an ideal of society. For essentially it is socialism and socialism, I think, is the only way the world is to escape disaster."²⁶ In his presidential address at Lahore in December 1929 he declared:

I must frankly confess I am a socialist and a republican, and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the old order which produces the modern kings and princes, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even the kings of old, and whose methods are as predatory as those of the old feudal aristocrats.

He recognized that Congress was not yet ready to adopt a full Socialistic programme but he remarked that "India will have to go that way...if she seeks to end her poverty and inequality, though she may evolve her own methods and may adapt the ideal to the genius of her race."²⁷

During the thirties Nehru was arrested four times and spent a total of four years in prison. The solitude of prison

²⁵Nehru, Autobiography, p. 182.

²⁶R. Dwivedi, ed., Life and Speeches of Nehru (Allahabad, 1930), p. 135.

²⁷Nehru, India's Freedom, p. 14.

life provided the leisure for reading and reflection. His thoughts on socialism, from this period, are found in "Whither India?", Glimpses of World History and other writings as well as in his Autobiography. Probably his presidential address at Lahore gives us some of his most candid statements on socialism.

In his enforced leisure he also turned to Marxist literature and theory.

Russia apart, the theory and philosophy of Marxism lightened up many a dark corner of my mind. History came to have a new meaning for me. The marxist interpretation threw a flood of light on it, and it became an unfolding drama with some order and purpose, however unconscious, behind it...It was the essential freedom from dogma and the scientific outlook of Marxism that appealed to me.²⁸

He remarks that even Lenin "warned us not to consider Marxism as a dogma which cannot be varied. Convinced of the truth of its essence, he was not prepared to accept or apply its details everywhere unthinkingly."²⁹ Nehru felt it would be absurd to blindly copy the Russian experiment, for the application of Marxist principles there depended on particular conditions in Russia at a specific stage in its historical development.

Nehru's main socialist objectives were clear in the early thirties. In 1933 he wrote Indira:

Socialism, I have told you is of many kinds. There is a general agreement however that it aims at the control by the state of the means of production, that is land and mines and factories and the like, and the means of distribution, like railways etc. and also banks and similar institutions. The idea is that individuals should not be allowed to exploit any of these methods or institutions,

²⁸Nehru, Autobiography, pp. 362-63.

²⁹Bright, Selected Writings, p. 26.

or the labour of others, to their own personal advantage.³⁰

There were also other objectives as he noted several years later.

We must push forward industrialization of the country. This again requires the development of social services- education, sanitation etc. And so the problem becomes a vast and many-sided one affecting land, industry and all developments of life, and so we see that it can be tackled only on a nationally planned basis without vested interests to obstruct the planning.³¹

Through socialism Nehru envisioned a restructuring of the political, social and economic fabric of society. Only revolutionary changes could end the vested interests in land and industry as well as the feudal and aristocratic Indian States system. His desire was to liquidate the poverty and misery of the peasant completely. Socialism to him appeared to be the only way. The capitalist system, in his opinion, could never provide equality of opportunity. He saw in socialism the ending of private property except in a restricted sense and the replacement of the profit system by the higher ideal of cooperative service. "It means ultimately, a change in our instincts and habits and desires. In short, it means a new civilization radically different from the capitalist world order."³²

Nehru went back to the fundamental premise of all socialists, be they utopian or scientific, namely that socialism means a system of total reconstruction of society. Not only the evil effects of a malady must be treated by the underlying evil causes

³⁰Nehru, Glimpses of World History, p. 543.

³¹Nehru, Unity of India, pp. 21-22.

³²Nehru, India's Freedom, p. 35.

must be eradicated.

In working out the details and methods of this socialistic restructuring of society which he envisioned for India, Nehru looked to the Russian model, realizing nevertheless that socialism in India would have to be adapted to Indian needs. Reflecting on social reconstruction he became convinced that not only India but that world forces were moving in the direction of socialism. In 1933 in "Whither India?" he wrote:

It is not a question of blaming capitalism or cursing capitalists and the like. Capitalism has been of great service to the world and individual capitalists are but tiny wheels in the big machine. The question now is whether the capitalist system has not outlived its day and now must give place to a better and saner ordering of human affairs which is more in keeping with the progress of science and human knowledge.³³

Capitalism had solved the problem of production but not of distribution. Nehru believed capitalism could not solve this problem; a new system would have to do this.

The capitalist system Nehru was turning against was laissez-faire capitalism which was in vogue in the 1920's and 1930's. During the 1930's when it began floundering Nehru was unable to envision a reformation of the system which would enable it to survive and become as acceptable an answer to the problems of production and distribution as socialism.³⁴

³³Nehru, India's Freedom, p. 26.

³⁴Shortly after the end of World War II he began to modify his antagonism to capitalism when he saw how many capitalist states were beginning to adopt many of the goals and ideals of the socialists, to become welfare states. He came to conclude that the complete abolition of the capitalist system was not necessary; reform was necessary so that a new economy combining capitalism and socialism could emerge.

Nehru believed socialism could not be achieved before independence. Since it involved the reorganization of economic and social life, the capture and possession of power by persons dedicated to socialism was a necessity. In the mid-thirties he asked:

In whose hands will power come when political freedom is achieved? For social change will depend on this, and if we want social change we must see that those who desire such change have the power to bring it about. If this is not what we are aiming at then it means that our struggle is meant to make India safe for vested interests who desire no change.³⁵

In his writings Nehru was rather ambiguous as to how this power of state which was a prerequisite for the introduction of socialism in India was to be brought about. He spoke of using the democratic process yet he also did not rule out the use of force.

Everything that comes in the way will have to be removed, gently if possible, forcibly if necessary. And there seems to be no doubt that coercion will often be necessary. But if force is used it should not be in the spirit of hatred or cruelty but with the dispassionate desire to remove an obstruction.³⁶

Nonviolent means were preferable but not unexpendable. In theory Nehru thought it was possible to establish socialism by democratic means if the full democratic process were available; in practice he agreed there would probably be difficulties because the opponents of socialism, when threatened, could reject the democratic method. On one occasion he voiced his doubts to Lord Lothian:

The rejection of democracy does not and should not come from the socialist side but from the other. That of course is

³⁵Jawaharlal Nehru, Eighteen Months in India 1936-37. (Allahabad, 1938), p. 39.

³⁶Nehru, Autobiography, p. 552.

fascism. How is this to be avoided? The democratic method has many triumphs to its credit but I do not know that it has yet succeeded in resolving a conflict about the very basic structure of the state of society.³⁷

He feared that the privileged classes and groups would be reluctant to give up their privileges and interests, making coercion and pressure necessary. He was convinced, however, that the nonviolent movement could be a very effective pressure.

"It is perfectly true that this method of coercion is the most civilized and moral method and it avoids as far as possible the unpleasant reactions and consequences of violence."³⁸ Suffering and dislocation would still be inevitable, but "we cannot put up with a major evil for fear of a far lesser one which in any event is beyond our powers to remedy."³⁹ If individuals or institutions stand in the way of change Nehru argued that "the good of a nation or of mankind must not be held up because some people who profit by the existing order object to change... Democracy indeed means the coercion of the minority by the majority."⁴⁰ Therefore, in his opinion, it was moral for a state to pass coercive laws taking away rights and privileges from some groups. "If a law affecting property rights or abolishing them to a large extent is passed by a majority is that to

³⁷Jawaharlal Nehru, A Bunch of Old Letters (London, 1960), p. 141.

³⁸Jawaharlal Nehru, Recent Essays and Writings (Allahabad, 1937), p. 35.

³⁹Nehru, Autobiography, p. 529.

⁴⁰Nehru, Autobiography, p. 543.

be objected to because it is coercion? Manifestly not, because the same procedure is followed in the adoption of all democratic laws. Objection therefore cannot be taken on the ground of coercion."⁴¹

There were those who questioned whether individual freedom could be maintained under a socialistic system as proposed by Nehru. Subhas Chandra Bose raised the question in one of his letters to Nehru. "How a Socialist can be an individualist as you regard yourself, beats me. The one is the antithesis of the other. How Socialism can ever come into existence through individualism of your type is also an enigma to me."⁴² Nehru replied:

Am I a socialist or an individualist? Is there a necessary contradiction in the two terms? Are we all such integrated human beings that we can define ourselves in a word or phrase? I suppose I am temperamentally and by training an individualist, and intellectually a socialist, whatever all this may mean. I hope that socialism does not kill or suppress individuality; indeed I am attracted to it because it will release innumerable individuals from economic and cultural bondage.⁴³

To Nehru both democracy and socialism aimed at the removal of disparities.

I do not see why under socialism there should not be a great deal of freedom for the individual; indeed, far greater freedom of conscience and mind, freedom of enterprise, and even the possession of private property on a restricted scale. Above all, he will have the freedom which comes from economic security, which only a small number possess today.⁴⁴

⁴¹Nehru, Autobiography, p. 543.

⁴²Nehru, Letters, p. 328.

⁴³Nehru, Letters, p. 353.

⁴⁴Nehru, Unity of India, pp. 117-118.

Nehru's socialism was academic and intellectual before independence. He envisioned a socialist utopia- a society in which there would be equality of opportunity regardless of class or caste and the possibility for everyone to lead a good life. Wealth would be equitably distributed so that everyone could live in comfort and peace; honor and merit would come as a result of ability and hard work and not because of caste or birth or riches. These were not traditional Indian ideals but Western ideals which Nehru had incorporated into his world view. He spoke of adapting them to Indian conditions and traditions but never made any specific attempts in this direction. After 1947 he began to realize how difficult it was to put his socialistic ideals into practice in the Indian situation.

INTERNATIONALISM

Nehru's internationalism was integrally related to his socialism. In his Autobiography he remarked: "Those...people who stand for national independence today also stand for the widest internationalism. For a socialist, nationalism can have no meaning..."¹ His public espousal of internationalism coincided with his public declaration of socialism in the late twenties. Marxian socialism not only gave him an explanation for India's internal problems but also provided him with an international conceptual framework.²

Nehru expressed an interest in people of other countries, particularly the oppressed or the underdog, at an early age. When he was ten, an age when most Indian boys would be oblivious to happenings in other parts of the world, at the height of the Boer War he remarked, "All my sympathies were with the Boers. I began to read the newspapers to get news of the fighting."³ A few years later "Japanese victories stirred up my enthusiasm and I waited eagerly for papers for fresh news daily. I invested in a large number of books on Japan and tried to read some of them."⁴ His outlook even as a young boy was not narrow or

¹Nehru, Autobiography, p. 420.

²As noted in the previous chapter, Marxian socialism gave Nehru a logical explanation for the poverty of the Indian masses; he became convinced that the Indian economic system was geared to the economic necessities of British capitalism. Marxian socialism also predicted a revolt of the oppressed colonial people against the exploitation of capitalism.

³Nehru, Autobiography, p. 12.

⁴Nehru, Autobiography, p. 16.

parochial. "...I mused of Indian freedom and Asiatic freedom from the thralldom of Europe."⁵

His seven year stay in England helped him to develop a greater sense of international awareness as well- both the time spent at Harrow and Cambridge and the visits to other countries during the period. Probably the trip to Ireland in 1907 had more impact on his thinking than any of the pleasure trips to Germany, France and Norway. He was impressed with the Sinn Fein movement and wrote the following note to his father: "It is a most interesting movement and resembles very closely the so-called Extremist movement in India. Their policy is not to beg favours but to wrest them. They do not want to fight England by arms, but 'to ignore her, boycott her and quietly assume administration of Irish affairs'."⁶

Nehru throughout his life recommended travel and interaction with people from other countries to fellow Indians. "If we do not personally know the people of a country we are apt to misjudge them even more than otherwise, and to consider them entirely alien and different."⁷ Modern science, world trade and swift methods of transport were all based on internationalism. People could no longer isolate themselves from the rest of the world. He wanted Indians to travel to meet others, learn from them and understand them. In the Discovery he wrote,

⁵Nehru, Autobiography, p. 16.

⁶Nanda, p. 90.

⁷Nehru, The Discovery of India, pp. 21-22.

That is much more necessary today, for we march to the one world of tomorrow where national cultures will be intermingled with the international culture of the human race. We shall therefore seek wisdom and knowledge and friendship and comradeship wherever we can find them, and cooperate with others in common tasks, but we are no suppliants for others' favours and patronage. Thus we shall remain true Indians and Asiatics, and become at the same time good internationalists and world citizens.⁸

Nehru's public espousal of an international approach to internal and world problems can be traced to his sojourn in Europe in 1926-27, necessitated by his wife's illness. He spent much of the time in Switzerland but was also able to pay brief visits to France, England, Belgium, Holland, Germany and the Soviet Union. Two excursions made a very distinct imprint on his world outlook- the visit to the anti-imperialist Congress in Brussels in February 1927 and the visit to Moscow in November of the same year.⁹

At Brussels Nehru came into contact with nationalist and socialist representatives from the Middle and Far East, North Africa, Central and South America, as well as Britain, France and Italy. There were those present who later played a decisive role in the struggles for national independence in Asia. Nehru was particularly drawn to those present who adhered to Marxian socialist views.

According to Marx the ultimate goal of history was the

⁸Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 540.

⁹He heard about the Brussels Congress in Berlin, the meeting place for exiled revolutionaries from many countries. He then wrote to the Indian National Congress and they appointed him as their representative to the Congress.

establishment of a classless society which would forever abolish the exploitation of man by man and would practice the chief article of his creed, "From each according to his abilities to each according to his needs." Such a society was to be achieved by the overthrow of the capitalist system- a system based on the exploitation of the working classes by the capitalists. Marx saw the whole history of the human race in terms of class struggle- the struggle between the exploiters and the exploited. This struggle led to revolutions and Marx predicted that these revolutions would finally merge into a world revolution via socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat; eventually this would result in a millenium.¹⁰ Lenin, a follower of Marx who proposed an alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry, foresaw a long struggle between the proletariat and the capitalist system. In this period of struggle there would be many national revolutions and uprisings; the final transformation of democratic revolutions and nationalist uprisings in the East into the great socialist world revolution would, he was convinced, be a slow and lengthy process.¹¹ In the twenties most socialists assumed that although a socialist revolution began on national soil it could not reach a successful conclusion within national frontiers. In their opinion all countries were politically and economically interdependent and the struggle of the proletariat

¹⁰Michael T. Florinsky, World Revolution and the U.S.S.R. (New York, 1933), pp. 1-2.

¹¹Florinsky, p. 18.

was conducted on a world scale. Thus a proletarian dictatorship in an isolated country would be provisional. Trotsky, for example, remarked, "A national revolution is not a self-contained unit; it is just a link in the international chain. The international revolution is a permanent process inspite of temporary setbacks and the ebbing of the tide."¹² "Socialism in one country" was a doctrine Stalin adopted when world revolution failed to materialize. Due to the immense task of social reconstruction at home, world revolution was temporarily shelved.

As a result of his contact with Marxian socialist thought Nehru began to view India as a part of a world struggle against exploitation and oppression. Other countries faced similar problems and at the Congress ideas of common action between oppressed nations inter se were discussed. In his first speech at the Brussels Congress Nehru's remarks show- a decided socialist bent: "The Indian National Congress stands for the freedom of India; freedom for the poor and oppressed from all exploitation. We welcome the International Congress because, as we understand it, it has been called together to further these aims and objectives in the international sphere." He also stated that Indian nationalism was based on an intense internationalism. "India is a world problem and as in the past so in the future other countries will be vitally affected by the condition of India."¹³ Nehru

¹²Florinsky, p. 24.

¹³Indian Quarterly Register (1927, Vol. 1) pp. 204-05. Quoted in Dorothy Norman, ed., Nehru - The First Sixty Years, Vol. 1 (London, 1965), p. 122.

was certainly concerned with the international scene and its implications for India's problems but this was not true of the majority of the members of the Indian National Congress; his statement was wishful thinking rather than fact.

At the plenary session of the Congress Nehru reiterated his stand:

I would like you to understand that the Indian problem is not only a national problem, but it directly affects a great number of other countries, and... is of world-wide interest because it (is) directly (affected by) the greatest and...most influential imperialism of our time... Because we believe this...International Congress affords a possibility of combined work, we welcome it and greet it.

Nehru was convinced the liberation of India would lead to the liberation of Asia and Africa. The Russian Revolution had indicated that the front of the imperialists¹⁵ did not necessarily break in the most highly developed country as suggested by Marx and Engels, but where the proletariat had a powerful ally in other social groups. (i.e. the peasants in Russia) Possibly the next revolution could take place in a country like India where the proletariat had a potential ally in the nationalist movement.¹⁶ From India the revolutionary spark could then be transmitted to the other Asian and African countries suffering from exploitation and colonial domination. World-wide emancipation from oppression and exploitation was the ultimate goal.¹⁷

¹⁴Bright, Before and After Independence, p. 368.

¹⁵Imperialism = last stage of capitalism according to Lenin

¹⁶Florinsky, p. 137.

¹⁷This is a recurring theme in Nehru's writings after 1927.

While at the Congress as well as after Nehru became active in helping to mobilize public opinion against the dispatch of British troops to China. The Brussels Congress, in a resolution sponsored by the British, Indian and Chinese delegates, demanded an immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from Chinese territory and also urged "the need of direct action including strikes and the imposition of embargo to prevent the movement of munitions and troops either in India or China, and from India to China."¹⁸

The trip to the Soviet Union in November 1927 also had a definite impact on his views; he became convinced that "Russia ...cannot be ignored by us, because she is our neighbour, a very powerful neighbour, which may be friendly to us and cooperate with us, or may be a thorn in our side. In either event we want to know her and understand her and shape our policy accordingly."¹⁹ He saw no danger in closer Russo-Indian relations. "It is inconceivable that Russia, in her present condition at least, and for a long time to come will threaten India...The two countries are today too similar to be exploited by each other, and there can be no economic motive for Russia to covet India."²⁰ In a more positive vein he noted that if Russia through her socialist experiment could find a solution to the problem of poverty and illiteracy it would be to India's benefit as these were

¹⁸Nanda, p. 255.

¹⁹Nehru, Soviet Russia, p. 3.

²⁰Nehru, Soviet Russia, p. 4.

also India's critical problems.

On his return to India at the end of 1927 Nehru admitted he had conscience pangs about his lengthy European stay: "For a soldier to desert from the field of battle and while away his time in leisurely repose far from the scenes of conflict is not usually considered a very praiseworthy act."²¹ For Nehru it had value however because he gained a new perspective on the conflict- an international perspective. Henceforth he saw the Indian struggle in terms of the larger world struggle for emancipation and freedom. In his presidential address at the Lahore Congress in 1929 he emphasized this:

India today is a part of a world movement. Not only China, Turkey, Persia and Egypt, but also Russia and the countries of the West are taking part in this movement and India cannot isolate herself from it. We have our problems, difficult and intricate and we cannot run away from them and take shelter in the wider problems that affect the world. But if we ignore them we do so at our own peril. Civilization today, such as it is, is not the creation or the monopoly of one people or nation. It is the complete fabric to which all countries have contributed and then have adapted to suit their own needs.²²

He also stated that independence and freedom from domination did not preclude India welcoming attempts at world cooperation and federation. "Civilization has had enough narrow nationalism and gropes towards a wider cooperation and interdependence...Having attained our freedom I have no doubt that India will welcome all attempts at world cooperation, and will even agree to give up part of her own independence to a larger group of which she is

²¹Dwivedi, p. 67.

²²Nehru, India's Freedom, pp. 8-9.

an equal member."²³ Nehru was particularly interested that Russia and China be a part of any contemplated larger group. Nineteenth century liberals convinced of the idea of the progress of the human race had envisioned a Utopian world state; by the nineteen twenties these hopes had largely been shattered. Socialists still spoke of a world socialist commonwealth once the proletarian revolution had triumphed in all countries.²⁴ Nehru, a socialist and idealist, retained the rather unrealistic dream of such a state.

There were Indian leaders previous to Nehru who had stressed internationalism but not due to any socialist sympathies. In his reading Nehru discovered that Swami Vivekananda and Tagore as well as Gandhi emphasized internationalism. Vivekananda, who died in 1902, was very emphatic in his internationalist emphasis.

There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial or national or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay the whole of life within its scope.²⁵

Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel prize-winning poet belonging to a later period than Vivekananda, was another person who, to Nehru, appeared to harmonize the ideals of East and West and broadened the bases of Indian nationalism. He became India's internationalist par excellence, believing in and working for international

²³Nehru, India's Freedom, pp. 11-12.

²⁴Florinsky, p. 184.

²⁵Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 340.

cooperation, taking India's message to other countries and bringing their message back to his own people. Nehru believed that it was Tagore's great service to India that "he forced the people in some measure out of their narrow grooves of thought and made them think of broader issues affecting humanity."²⁶

In Gandhi Nehru saw a real synthesis between nationalism and internationalism. Gandhi tried to pattern his movement to be free of hatred; his message of love and nonviolence was not only for India but for the whole world. He felt it was as applicable to Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia as to England. Many, even of his followers, disagreed with this supposition; they argued that if the opponent, Britain, had not been a humane one, such a method would not have had positive results. On one occasion he said, "My idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole of my country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race hatred here. Let that be our nationalism."²⁷ His patriotism included the good of mankind in general and he saw his service to India as a service to humanity.

Although the leaders of the Indian nationalist movement had an internationalist emphasis, most of the rank and file members held to a narrow nationalism. At times Nehru became very discouraged with his colleagues. In their speeches they glorified India's past and stressed the material and spiritual injuries of alien

²⁶Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 342.

²⁷Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 426.

rule, the sufferings of the people and the indignity of foreign domination; the national honor demanded a sacrifice at the altar of the motherland. Such themes found an echo in the heart of every Indian and Nehru was also moved by them. "But," said he, "though the truth in them remained, they seemed to grow a little thin and thread-bare with constant use, and their ceaseless repetition prevented the consideration of other problems and vital aspects of our struggle. They only fostered emotion and did not encourage thought."²⁸ Nehru was alive to the problems of India but he saw them in the broader context of international events. This perspective was one of his greatest contributions to the national movement.

Nehru's study of world history during his leisure hours in prison made him an even more convinced internationalist. In 1933 he wrote Indira:

Our incursions into history have shown us how the world has grown more and more compact, how different parts have come together and become interdependent. The world indeed has become one single, inseparable whole, each part influencing and being influenced by the other. It is quite impossible now to have a separate history of nations. We have outgrown that stage, and only a single world history, connecting the different threads from all the nations, and seeking to find the real forces that move them, can now be written with any useful purpose.²⁹

Because of his firm belief in the interdependence of nations he was deeply perturbed by the international scene in the thirties as France and England did not come to the aid of the democratic

²⁸Nehru, Autobiography, p. 182.

²⁹Nehru, Glimpses of World History, p. 947.

forces in Spain and Czechoslovakia; the whole system of collective security was sabotaged by the very powers who formerly had declared their faith in it. The acquiescence of these powers to the invasion of Manchuria and Abyssinia was also resented, not only by Nehru, but by Indians as a whole. Demonstrations in favor of Spain and China were held and the Congress extended help in the form of food and medical missions. Congress members opposed the British foreign policy which was developing towards cooperation with the Fascist powers. To them, as Nehru put it, "Fascism was the mirror of imperialism", a defeat for freedom and democracy. As part of the Empire, India was bound by British foreign policy so Congress, by resolutions and declarations³⁰ tried to dissociate itself from it and develop an independent policy.

The policy of the United States and the Soviet Union were also a disappointment to Nehru. The United States adhered to isolationism till Pearl Harbor was attacked although it was in evident sympathy with England, France and China and hated Japanese aggression and militarism. The Soviet Union, to Nehru the very emblem of internationalism (as a socialist country) followed a strictly national policy in the thirties bringing confusion to many of its friends and sympathizers.³¹ Pondering these developments

³⁰These resolutions and declarations came largely at Nehru's instigation. As early as 1927 he moved the Resolution on the War Danger at the Madras Congress. Declarations reaffirming this position were made at a number of Congress sessions in the thirties.

³¹This was not the first occasion on which socialism had succumbed to nationalism. The Second International, set up in 1889, disintegrated when nationalist ties overrode international socialist ties during World War I, particularly in Germany, France and Austria.

in other countries Nehru came to realize that "individuals and small groups may become internationally minded and may even be prepared to sacrifice personal and immediate national interests for a larger cause, but not so nations. It is only when the international interests are believed to be in line with national interests that they arouse enthusiasm."³² An optimum foreign policy would thus attempt to conciliate national and international interests. Nehru perceived this was no easy task for he was convinced that till a country achieved its own freedom its main energies would be directed toward that end.

The conflict between nationalism and internationalism caused him much inner torment between 1939 and 1942. Watching the international scene in the late thirties he anticipated the war and the controversy over India's role in it. He maintained that if Britain would grant Indian independence India would be prepared to support Britain but if Britain continued to dominate it would be absurd to follow her leadership in foreign policy.

On September 3, 1939, the day Britain declared war on Germany, Lord Linlithgow proclaimed India to be a belligerent country without consulting Indian political leaders. There was no doubt in his mind about India assisting Britain. Nehru and other Indian nationalists viewed the war from a different perspective. In the fall of 1939 they termed it an "imperialist" war, a struggle between an "aggressive" Fascism seeking power, wealth and prestige and "reactionary" Britain and France clinging

³²Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 425.

to their imperial empires. India declared it could not participate in such a conflict other than as a free nation. Already at the Madras Congress session in 1927 Nehru had stated this view in the "Resolution on the War Danger": "The Congress declares that the people of India have no quarrel with their neighbours...(In the event of Britain entering an 'imperialist' war) it will be the duty of the people of India to refuse to take part in such a war or to cooperate with them in any way whatsoever."³³ Congress reaffirmed this stance at Lucknow in 1936, Faizpur in 1937, Haripura in 1938 and Tripuri in March 1939. It was no surprise then that the Viceroy's decree aroused such indignation among Indian nationalists.

The decree of September 3 set in motion a series of protracted negotiations between the Congress and the British Government which finally culminated in the 'Quit India' movement in 1942.

For Nehru the war crisis posed an agonizing dilemma. He longed for an honorable settlement with Britain which would allow Congress to participate on the side of the Allies. Intellectually, as well as emotionally, he was strongly opposed to the Axis powers and had openly declared his opposition since the early thirties. On the other hand he was dedicated to the cause of Indian independence and freedom. For many of his colleagues the war posed no problem; the war in Europe was remote and did not concern them. All their energies went into the independence struggle. Nehru however as an internationalist felt Fascism

³³Report of the 42nd Indian National Congress (Ms.).
Unnumbered pages. Quoted in Norman, p. 142.

posed a real challenge to democracy. Thus he was in a dilemma - a dilemma he never reconciled.

From the outbreak of the war he stuck to his proposition of actively supporting the Allies if freedom were granted to India. The British Government rejected the condition. Eventually Nehru's dedication to Indian nationalism triumphed - but not without a struggle. Gandhi described Nehru's inner turmoil in the summer of 1942 in a letter to the Viceroy August 14:

In the misery (fear of impending ruin of China and Russia) he (Nehru) tried to forget his old quarrel with imperialism... I have argued with him for days together. He fought against my position with a passion I have no words to describe. But the logic of facts overwhelmed him. He yielded when he saw clearly that without the freedom of India that of the other two was in great jeopardy. Surely you are wrong in having imprisoned such a powerful friend and ally.³⁴

It was Nehru who moved the resolution on August 7, 1942, calling on the British to quit India immediately. The resolution contained an offer as well as a challenge: "On the declarations of India's independence a Provisional Government will be formed and a Free India will become an ally of the United Nations." A mass struggle on non-violent lines under Gandhi's leadership was also sanctioned by Congress. The Government of India reacted quickly; on August 9 Gandhi, Nehru and all the members of the Congress Working Committee were imprisoned for the duration of the war. Till August Nehru had wavered but his dedication to the Indian national cause and his loyalty to Gandhi finally proved to be decisive.

³⁴Government of India, Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi, August 1942-April 1944. Quoted in Brecher, p. 286.

CONCLUSION

On August 15, 1947 Jawaharlal Nehru became independent India's first prime minister. Now his beliefs and ideas were confronted with the reality of political power- the power indispensable to the realization of his dreams. When asked by Tibor Mende whether any changes had occurred in his thinking due to his new position of power, he remarked, "Naturally one tones down in a position of responsibility. One has to carry the people with one."¹ Observers could not help but notice that there was a significant gap between his ideals of the twenties and thirties and his actions as a statesman. The main pillars of his thought- liberalism, nationalism, socialism, Gandhism, internationalism- remained unchanged but pragmatism loomed very large in his actions.

As a statesman he remained a liberal devoted to political democracy and individual freedom. In a speech on February 18, 1953 he stated the reason for his commitment to democratic methods in building the Indian state. "We have decided to do so because we feel that democracy offers society something of the highest human values."² Although the Indian constitution was drafted by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Nehru provided the basic democratic philosophy and goals in the Objectives Resolution. He was also the driving force behind the acceptance of a parliamentary system of government. As soon as order was restored after the Partition

¹Mende, Nehru: Conversations on India and World Affairs, p. 37.

²Jawaharlal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches 1949-1953. (Delhi, 1954), pp. 252-53.

he insisted on holding free elections. A predominantly illiterate electorate was thus educated in the meaning of the ballot and the principle of periodic choice by the governed as to who should govern was established. He also championed freedom of speech and religion and constitutional safeguards for individual rights. Along with these accomplishments there were also failures. One of Nehru's main weaknesses was his disinclination to delegate authority. Power was concentrated in his hands to such an extent that the process of decision-making almost came to a halt whenever he was out of the country; no successors were trained to assure continuity of policy.

Prior to independence Nehru's socialism was largely academic. After 1947 he remained committed to socialism and planning but "gradualism" became a keynote in his ventures. For twenty years he had preached revolution in the Indian countryside, raising the hopes and expectations of the peasants. Once in power he realized how difficult it was to bring about such a revolution. Progress was made in that the samindari (tax farming) system was abolished but in the areas of land consolidation, ceilings on land holdings, pooling resources, improving techniques and organization, and rural credit the program lagged and the yearly population increase aggravated the situation.

Nehru reaffirmed nationalization as his ideal as prime minister, but he also made concessions to private enterprise. Many of his colleagues did not favor socialism; in order to placate them and also to meet the crisis in production he encouraged private industry. The business community rejoiced but

radicals called it a retreat. They recalled his strong words in 1928..."Revolutionary changes cannot be brought about by reformist tactics and methods. The reformer who is afraid of radical change or of overthrowing an oppressive regime and seeks merely to eliminate some of its abuses, becomes in reality, one of its defenders."³

Planning faced many obstacles in newly independent India such as: a large population divided by language, caste, culture and religion, a predominantly peasant population, a large yearly population increase and shortage of personnel. Nehru, nevertheless, remained undaunted in his commitment to planning and creating a welfare state employing democratic means. His socialism did not include a resorting to "war communism."⁴ In 1956 he said: "I believe in our capacity...in winning over people rather than fighting them...We can bring about social changes and developments...by the friendly cooperative approach, rather than the approach to trying to eliminate each other."⁵ The Five Year Plans, inaugurated in 1951, increased production; even so the country remained poor and unemployment increased due to the tremendous population growth.

³Dwivedi, p. 90.

⁴The Soviets resorted to war communism in 1919; when it proved to be unsuccessful Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy in 1921.

⁵Government of India, Planning Commission, "Prime Minister's Speech at the Meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Development Council on January 7, 1956, p. 4. Quoted in Brecher, pp. 527-28.

With reference to Gandhism or nonviolence Nehru was always a pragmatist. Many foreign observers failed to realize that to him it was a tactic rather than an ideology even before independence. Thus his use of force in Goa should have come as no surprise. Peaceful efforts to persuade the Portuguese to withdraw from Goa had failed. If no action were taken he was convinced a power vacuum would develop due to the effete-ness of Portuguese administration. Force was the only alternative. Speaking to a reporter the day before the seizure he remarked, "Taking any military action is contrary to my grain. It hurts me to do it. I could only agree to this because the consequences of not taking it would have been harmful even from the point of view of non-violence."⁶ On the issue of Kashmir he also deviated from Gandhism. For Nehru the very reason for the existence of India was at stake in Kashmir. If India's claim as a secular state was to remain valid Kashmir must be integrated into the Indian Union and neither be allowed to join Pakistan nor become independent; coercive measures must be employed if the noncoercive failed.

Nehru's nationalism, once independence had been achieved, was the vital force behind his assertion of India's right to recognition among the world powers. His internationalism, which had kept the nationalist movement from becoming narrow and

⁵Government of India, Planning Commission, "Prime Minister's Speech at the Meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Development Council on January 7, 1956, p. 4. Quoted in Brecher, pp. 527-28.

parochial, was now forcibly demonstrated in India's foreign policy, of which he was the sole architect. The championing of the right to independence of all colonial peoples continued to be one of his major theses, as did anti-racism, the drive for recognition of equality of all races, especially of colored people all over the world. His strong advocacy of anti-colonialism and anti-racism caused Nehru to oppose such Western-sponsored alliances as SEATO and the Baghdad Pact because he felt they were an attempt on the part of the Western nations to exercise power in an area from which they had just recently retreated. Nehru favored non-alignment with any power bloc; he desired friendship with all countries. By being non-aligned he hoped to secure aid from all quarters for India's economic development and also to avoid alienating either of her big neighbors. He was especially interested in China's friendship and had been since the thirties for he felt Asian nations should work together for world recognition as a vital force and should determine issues of concern to them without outside interference. (The Sino-Indian conflict which culminated in open war in 1962 cruelly awakened Nehru to political realities) Throughout his life he was an ardent supporter of the United Nations and other cooperative international ventures such as the Nuclear Test Ban Agreement. His ideal remained an international world state to which member nations would delegate certain rights; he seemed to be

⁶Marie Seton, Panditji - A Portrait of Jawaharlal Nehru (London, 1967), p. 316.

oblivious of the incompatibility of such a vision with the struggles of newly independent nations such as India, seeking to achieve a status of their own.

In some respects Nehru was a person whose ideas did not quite fit into the post World War II era. He was a vestige from the nineteenth century- an old-fashioned humanitarian socialist and cosmopolite with a vision for an improved, educated and cultured humanity going about the tasks of a world commonwealth. On the other hand he, more than any other person, lifted India into the twentieth century. Regardless of how we assess his ideas and ideals, we must admit "this was a man who with all his mind and heart loved India and the Indian people."⁷

⁷The Statesman (Calcutta), January 21, 1954. This was the epitaph Nehru proposed for himself. Quoted in Brecher, p. 640.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S
POLITICAL WORLD VIEW

by

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Jawaharlal Nehru, who became independent India's first prime minister August 15, 1947, developed most of his basic beliefs and ideas in the twenties and thirties, long before he assumed political power. Although he never adopted one ideology in toto strands of various ideologies such as liberalism, nationalism, socialism and internationalism appealed to him at various stages in the development of his political thinking. Nationalism was the dominant and underlying strand in his world view from the twenties on. This nationalism encompassed not only freedom from alien rule but also a desire to raise the level of the Indian people psychologically and spiritually as well as politically and economically. For Nehru a sense of national consciousness, a sense of belonging together against the rest of the world, was the heart of nationalism. The European ideal of a monolithic nation with a direct relationship between the citizen and the state was his ideal and he failed to realize how unrealistic an ideal this was in the Indian setting.

Although nationalism was the underlying ideological strand in Nehru's world view, socialism was also deeply rooted in his thought. His contact with the poverty of the masses in the early twenties made him realize the limitations of a purely political approach in the nationalist movement. Socialism, and Marxian socialism in particular, to Nehru offered a program for restructuring society in such a way as to eliminate the poverty and misery of the masses. In his opinion, the capitalist system could never provide equality of opportunity. He saw in socialism the ending of private property except in a restricted sense and the

replacement of the profit motive by the higher ideal of cooperative service. He envisioned a socialist utopia- a society in which there would be equality of opportunity regardless of class or caste and the possibility for everyone to lead a good life. Wealth would be equally distributed so that everyone could live in comfort and peace; merit and honor would come as a result of ability and hard work and not because of caste or birth or riches. Not till 1947 did Nehru realize the tremendous difficulties in putting such socialistic aims into practice in the Indian situation.

Nehru's internationalism was integrally related to his socialism. (Theoretically all socialists are internationalists) He viewed India's struggle as part of a world struggle against exploitation and oppression and was convinced that the liberation of India would lead to the liberation of Asia and Africa. His ultimate aim was an international world state to which member nations would delegate certain rights.

When Nehru assumed power in 1947 his ideas and beliefs were confronted with the reality of political power. On the whole the main pillars of his thought remained unchanged but pragmatism loomed large in his actions.

In many respects Nehru was a person whose idea did not quite fit into the post World War II era. He was a vestige from the nineteenth century- a humanitarian socialist and cosmopolite with a vision for an improved, educated and cultured humanity going about the tasks of a world commonwealth. On the other hand, he more than any other person, lifted India into the twentieth

century. Regardless of how we assess his ideas and ideals, we must admit "this was a man who with all his mind and heart loved India and the Indian people."¹

¹This was the epitaph Nehru proposed for himself. The Statesman (Calcutta), January 21, 1954. Quoted in Michael Brecher, Nehru: A Political Biography (London, 1959), p. 640.